

Harvey Cedars Hotel
(Harvey Cedars Bible Conference Center)
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
Cedars Avenue
Harvey Cedars
Ocean County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1043

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NJ
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HARVEY CEDARS HOTEL (Harvey Cedars Bible Conference Center)

HABS No. NJ-1143

Location: Cedars Avenue, Harvey Cedars, Ocean County, New Jersey

Present Owner: Harvey Cedars Bible Conference
Box 3000, Harvey Cedars, New Jersey 08008

Present Use: Year-round conference center; religious retreats

Significance: The Harvey Cedars is the last surviving late-nineteenth-century hotel on Long Beach Island. Before significant enlargement in 1887 the building served as a sportsmen's and seamen's lodge; from 1921-1935 the building operated as a Y.W.C.A. camp, and as a Bible Conference Center since 1941. Harvey Cedars does not seem to have operated for long as a comfortable resort hotel--perhaps 1887-1903. The building has accommodated different generations of recreational uses at the shore, and unlike many similar structures, has survived these changes.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: This building has a complicated construction history (see page 9). The original structure was erected circa 1837-1841 as a sportsmen's lodge. Additions were made to this building, so that by 1865 its size had roughly doubled. The major renovations which transformed the building to its present appearance occurred between 1887 and 1903; the current hotel was built around and over the earlier buildings. Several references assert that the older buildings burned down about 1880, and that the new hotel was constructed on the original site. However, much evidence suggests that this information is incorrect. Al Oldham, conference director since 1951, points out that in decades of repairs he has never found ashes or signs of a fire at the foundations. He has also noted floorboard changes, piles of plaster under the building indicating alterations, and signs in the walls of the south lounge that the guestrooms at that location used to open onto an outside porch (now part of the lounge).¹
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The original structure was erected by Captain Samuel Perrine about 1837-1841--as the Connahasatt House at Harvest Cedars. Captain Isaac Jennings took it over circa 1881. During these decades the hotel catered to sportsmen and seamen, and ran its own farm garden. By about 1886, the hotel and 200 acres of land became part of Harvey Cedars Beach Company. Billy Thompson, "Duke of Gloucester" undertook a major expansion in 1887, in anticipation of guests brought by the new railroad connection. After the hotel closed in 1903,

¹ Personal interview, Rev. Al Oldham, 29 July 1992.

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a series of heirs could not afford to operate it. On May 11, 1912 the Harvey Cedars Beach Company was forced into bankruptcy, and sold at Sheriff's sale to Walter Pincus of Philadelphia for \$1,000. Pincus also held the mortgage on the 206 acres and the old hotel for \$58,692. In 1914 Pincus sold most of the property, including the hotel, to Daniel B. Frazier Company. On June 1, 1921, Frazier sold the hotel and six acres of land for \$31,500 to the YWCA of Philadelphia, which transferred to the YWCA of Harvey Cedars in 1923. During the years 1921-1935, the "Y" operated the complex as Camp Whelan for girls.

Camp Whelan closed down during depression in 1935 for lack of money, and was sold in 1939 to a Ms. Mabel Bayard of Philadelphia. The building lay vacant from 1935 to 1941, at which point it was spotted and purchased by two young evangelists. The Rev. Jack Murray, an evangelist of Chester, Pennsylvania with the summer bible school movement, had been holding sessions in the state parks of Pennsylvania. Murray and Bill Ritchie purchased the building for \$7,000 from Ms. Bayard, beginning the Harvey Cedars Bible Conference.²

4. Alterations and Additions: Although, as noted above, the hotel had undergone alterations prior to 1887, the better documented transformation occurred about 1887. One photograph and a painting show that the pre-1887 building was a plain two-and-a-half story white building, with a first-floor porch lining the bayside, and half of the oceanside. The bayside first-floor guest rooms were entered from the porch; the former windows for these rooms are blocked up inside the walls today, according to Al Oldham. At the building's center, a narrow two-story building extended on the bayside, perhaps serving as the main entrance. The 1887 renovations added to the hotel especially on the south and bayside, raised the building (creating a crawl space), added another story, third-floor dormers, gambrel roof, (probably the water tower), added an octagonal tower, and sheathed the building with shingle siding. The dates of this transformation are somewhat unclear; the year on the fireplaces is 1903 even though the major work was supposedly undertaken in 1887.

B. Historical Context:

In the late 1700s, a few small settlements dotted the isolated, virtually treeless barrier island which would come to be known as Long Beach Island. These people tended towards the inlets at the island's ends, where ships sought protection from storms. Through the early nineteenth century, several men developed businesses to serve the occasional visitor, and some homes evolved into boarding hotels and taverns for city sportsmen. Others also resided on the island in shanty-type housing--beach recluses and whalers who hunted and scavenged. Houses were used as taverns and stores. By the 1850s and 1860s three sizeable boarding hotels offered services--the Harvey Cedars Hotel, the Mansion of Health (at Great Swamp), and Bond's Long Beach

² This account of ownership has used the following deed books in the Ocean County Clerk's Office, Tom's River: Book 1097 p.31; Book 1062 p.468; Book 611 p.48; Book 563 p.143; Book 427 p.92; and Book 393 p.447. I also relied upon John Bailey Lloyd, "The Harvey Cedars Hotel," Eighteen Miles of History, (Harvey Cedars, New Jersey: Down the Shore/Sandpaper Press, 1986); and Al Oldham, "The Last of the Great 19th Century Hotels," Harvey Cedars Bible Conference: Living History on Long Beach Island, 1991 newsletter.

House (at the southern end).³

Two recent historians have tried to convey a sense of the experience at these hotels--John Bailey Lloyd, in Six Miles at Sea, and Marilyn Kralik in her dissertation chapter on the bayman's wife in "Buying Barnegat Bay: A Look at Developing Ocean County Shore Resorts Through the Eyes of Three Women, August 9, 1879." Both sketches portray how wealthy men particularly savored the frontier experience of these hotels--enjoying the luxuries of fresh seafood and waterfowl, and liquor, while sportgunning and courting the rugged life. We also see the division between those who worked on the Island, and those who visited. Kralik also documents transition from the boarding hotel era, defined by the island's isolation, to the boom of cottage development swept along by the arrival of the railroad in 1886. The Harvey Cedars Hotel survived this difficult transition to move with the trends of the twentieth century.

The Harvey Cedars Hotel was known for its public dance hall on the south side of the main building--the site of many square dances and reels. When Captain Isaac Jennings operated the Hotel in the early-mid 1880s, he and his wife upgraded the services to try to compete with the more refined hotels springing up on Long Beach Island. Yet the Harvey Cedars Hotel was "different:" Mrs. Jennings' brother David M. White, a beachcomber enthusiast, decorated the grounds with beach wreckage so that it resembled a maritime junkyard. After Jennings' death, William Thompson undertook the total architectural transformations detailed above in "alterations and additions." With its much more sophisticated external appearance, and its elaborate pressed-tin dining room, the hotel hoped to finally compete for the recreational trade Thompson knew would arrive on the island with the railroad. However, the development of the island's southern portion around Beach Haven proved to be too much for Harvey Cedars, and the newly renovated hotel closed in 1903.⁴ At the Harvey Cedar Beach Company's bankruptcy sale in 1912, the hotel's sale included: "all personal property belonging to Harvey Cedars Beach Company including furniture, carpets, rugs, silverware of every kind and description now in the Hotel or on the premises excepting glassware, chinaware, table linens and bed linens and except the stock of wines and liquors."⁵

The Philadelphia YWCA reopened the building from 1921-1935 as Camp Whelan--"a summer camp...for the purpose of giving working girls in that city a summer vacation at the shore at a figure they can afford to pay." The camp was compared by contemporaries to John Wanamaker's camp in Island Heights, and another home--the Girls' Friendly House operated by the Episcopal Church. Thus after evolving through years as a sportsmen's hotel and a more elegant hotel, the building also served as a "camp" in the fresh air movement to provide vacations to young city workers.⁶

³ John Bailey Lloyd, "The Harvey Cedars Hotel," Eighteen Miles at Sea (Harvey Cedars, NJ: Down the Shore/Sandpiper Press, 1986).

⁴ Lloyd, Eighteen Miles of History.

⁵ Deed Book 393 p. 449.

⁶"Becoming More Popular for Summer--'Fresh Air' Camps," New Jersey...., 14 July 1922.

After the YWCA camp closed during the Depression, the building deteriorated in the wake of vandalism. In its most recent incarnation, the Harvey Cedars Hotel has served as a religious retreat--embodying yet another major theme in the shore's development.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a three-story, colonial revival late-nineteenth-century hotel; an essentially linear compound plan, with several buildings protruding irregularly from the basic rectangular shape. The building is cedar shingle, with a gambrel roof and gabled dormers on most of the structure. A multi-storied porch on the south end, a centered octagonal look-out tower, and square three-story water tower, as well as a long hipped-roof porch extending most of the bay side, provide other distinctive architectural elements.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in very good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a large three-story rectangular structure with protruding cross-gable wings.
2. Foundations: The building rests on brick foundations, with a crawl space beneath.
3. Wall construction: The walls are covered with cedar shingles.
4. Structural system, framing: The building is of wood frame construction. Al Oldham asserts that parts of the main lounge (which includes a section of the hotel's oldest portion) has mortise-and-tenon construction, with 3" x 8" rough-hewn joists. The newer sections have 2" x 12" joists, and is probably of balloon frame construction.⁷
5. Porches: On the building's south end there are three stories of porches with Doric columns. In addition the first floor has a porch which wraps around the south end, further along the bay side than the ocean side. The balustrade railings are simple, squared vertical posts.
6. Chimneys: There are two brick chimneys; one at the south end, the other extends from the small building protruding from the bay side.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The ocean-side entry door has double-door access, each with a large glass panel, and single wood panel below. Glazing trim and wood panel have modest carved designs.

⁷ Personal interview, Al Oldham, 29 July 1992.

b. Windows: The building has predominantly six-over-six-light wooden sash windows. Window lintels have simple decorative crown.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main building has a gambrel roof (for all but northwest portion)--a north wing and bayside extension have gabled roofs. The covering is asphalt over the old cedar shingles.

b. Cornice: There is an unornamented box return cornice on the gabled sections.

c. Dormers, towers: The third floor has gabled dormers; a three-story square tower with hipped roof on the bay side used to contain the building's water tower and is now unused. An octagonal tower with six-over-six-light-sash windows sits atop the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: Today the first floor contains several lounges, the office, a canteen and five bedrooms believed to survive from the oldest portion of the hotel--about 1837. The largest lounge, with pressed tin walls and ceilings, was formerly the hotel's dining room, while the canteen had served as the kitchen.

b. Second floor: The second and third floors contain guest rooms located off of a central corridor.

2. Stairways: The main stairway has a spindle-work balustrade, and square corner posts with some molding trim.
3. Flooring: A change in the floorboards of a third-floor guestroom shows the extension of the building. Random, scrap wood pieces indicate that the third floor had been an attic; the extension shows regular pieces intended for non-attic use.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The canteen has tin walls underneath the modern panelling (indicating its earlier use as the hotel's kitchen). Besides the dining room walls (see Decorative features), other surfaces are smooth plaster finish.
5. Doorways and doors: Many of the interior doors have plain wood trim with bull's eye corner blocks.
6. Decorative features: The walls, ceiling, egg-and-dart moldings, and columns of the hotel's former dining room consist of elaborate pressed tin designs.

Two large fireplaces, dated 1903, have brick lower portions, while the upper portions consists of small stones and shells pressed into cement. The fireplace's creator embedded a small metal piece inscribed with his name into the fireplace as well, and the hotel's logo and fireplace date.

7. Mechanical systems:

- a. Lighting fixtures: The locations for gas fixtures are still evident in the former dining room.
- b. Heating: A gas heating system was added about twenty years ago.

D. Site:

- 1. General Setting: Although the hotel is entirely on the bayside of the barrier island, it is set on a peninsula so that the building's eastern face is considered "oceanside," the western face is "bayside". Before the railroad arrived in 1886, providing accessible land transportation, the building's bayside was the main facade since most guests arrived by boat. The later renovations, completed by 1903, provided for an entrance on the oceanside. It is difficult to determine which side today is the main facade, and which is the main entrance.
- 2. Outbuildings: Many new buildings have recently been constructed as part of the Conference center complex, including a separate dining hall.
- 3. Landscaping, enclosures: Al Oldham, director of the Harvey Cedars Bible Conference since 1951, has done most of the current landscaping--including planting the spruce trees growing close to the building on its oceanside. At the building's south end are two beautifully-twisted dead cedars, and one live one. Very few cedars survive today on the island.

The Conference center is located in a section of Harvey Cedars mostly occupied by small-scale modern residential buildings, since the immediate area was severely devastated by the storm of 1962.

Prepared by: Alison Isenberg
HABS Historian
Summer 1992

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Old views: The Harvey Cedars Bible Conference has several 19th century photographs and paintings of the building, as well as postcards based on early twentieth-century views.
- B. Primary and unpublished sources: Because the building has changed ownership regularly, there is no single archive of materials on the building. John Bailey Lloyd, historian and Ocean County Librarian, has done research on the building and could provide assistance. Besides trying to track down materials on YWCA Camp Whelan, the hotel, etc. individually--local newspapers do provide relevant accounts of activities at the building. Deed Books, Mortgage Books, and bankruptcy records also provide material. See also:

Lloyd, John Bailey. Eighteen Miles of History. New Jersey: Down the Shore/SandPaper Press.

Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian. The project was completed during summer 1992. The project historian was Alison Isenberg (University of Pennsylvania). The photography was produced by David Ames, University of Delaware, Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering.

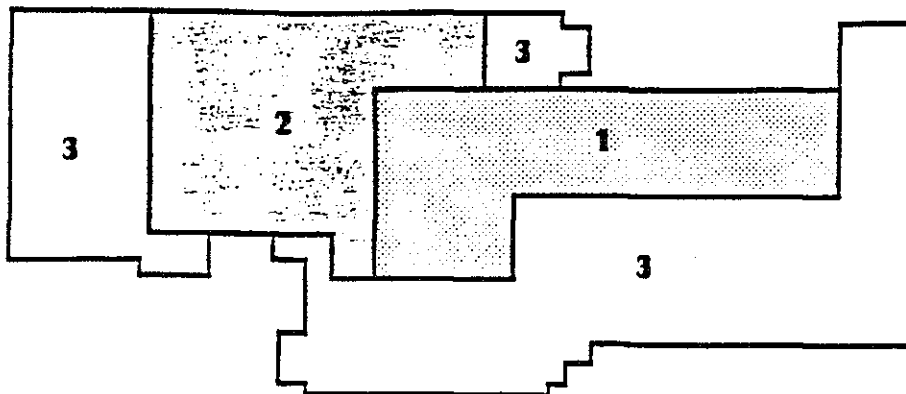
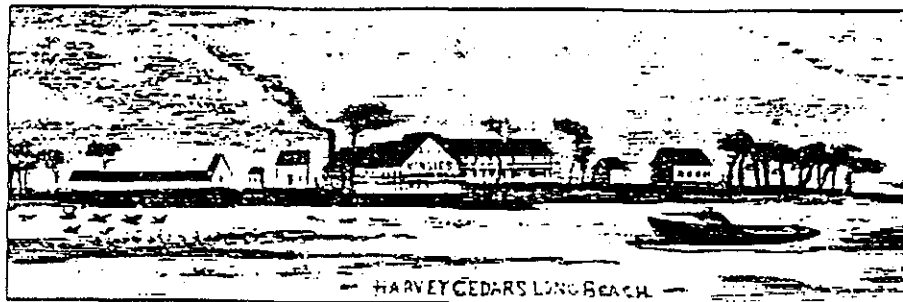
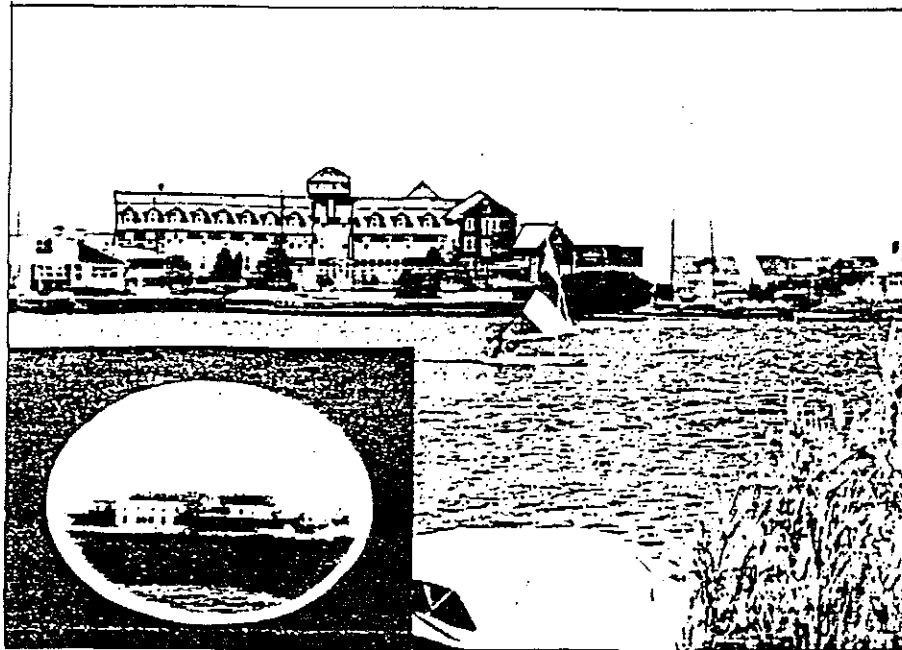


From an original oil painting circa 1840-1870

The Harvey Cedars Hotel. From an original painting ca. 1840-70, artist unknown.
View from the bayside.

from:

Lloyd, John Bailey, "The Harvey Cedars Hotel, Living History on Long Beach Island.
Harvey Cedars Bible Conference 1991 calendar and newsletter (July 1991): 2.



#1 — The oldest, L-shaped section, inside the present hotel, probably built by Capt. Sammy J. Perrine in 1837; #2, oval inset — The hotel after 1865; #3, top picture — present hotel, built "over and around" the prior structure and completed by 1903.

from:

"The Last of the Great 19th Century Hotels," Living History on Long Beach Island, Harvey Cedars Bible Conference 1991 calendar and newsletter (July 1991): 1.



HARVEY CEDARS HOTEL — 1941

"Harvey Cedars Hotel - 1941," post card (1941).



"Harvey Cedars, N.J. Harvey Cedars Hotel," post card (1909).